

Galusha Pennypacker

Brigadier General and Brevet Major
General, United States Volunteers

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America's Youngest General

1917

CHRISTOPHER SOWER COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA





G. Pennypacker.

BREVET MAJOR GENERAL G PENNYPACKER, U. S. A.

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"Dangers on dangers all around him grow."—Iliad.

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MANY thousands of men fought to preserve the Union and are unknown beyond the country church-yards where their names are graven. Many splendid deeds were done which will cause sailors like the great-hearted Craven, the fearless Bailey, the daring Cushing to be unforgotten. Many soldier names live in the nation's records because of deep-lying, dependable courage and manly character, such as marked the careers of Bayard and Hartranft. Many thousands of soldiers suffered by reason of wounds, injuries, sickness. There were men in the loyal host whose names blazed up overnight, as if written in the sky in letters of flame for all the North to read, to pay tribute to and remember.

Among all these there was none that fought more bravely, there was none that did more daring deeds, there was none that was cooler in the rush and the fury of battle, there was none that suffered more severely or more constantly or longer than Galusha Pennypacker. There was none whose name oftener was flashed over the country because of some act of heroism that called forth song and toast and cheers. His career was the career of a hero of romance, run swiftly in a land whose later novelists and poets can discern no romance. In the Balkans, in the Scotland of Sir Walter Scott, in the Poland of Sienkiewicz, his romantic story would have become a part of the country's folklore, imparted at the fireside, learned in the cradle.

If his was a career of glory, it was also a career of infinite pathos. From infancy to death his life was one of loneliness. The only child of a mother who died when

he was an infant, his father a Mexican War soldier and California adventurer, from the period at which memory begins he never knew his parents, and never had brother, sister or wife. When the army mail came into camp, and around their fires soldiers read their letters from home, there was no home letter for him. The ranking officer after the war at different army posts—Nashville, Grenada, Jackson, Covington, Fort Riley, his was the isolation of a commanding officer. Wounded seven times within eight months, the memory of his five promotions within a single year could not assuage the pain endured daily for fifty-one years. Secretary of War Dickinson expressed his amazement at discovering that there were prominent Philadelphians unaware that for thirty-three years after his retirement from the United States Army he had lived in their own city, and he died October 1, 1916, in the lonely hours of the night, with no relative or friend at his hospital bedside.

Let no man go to war with the thought that he will win unspoiled glory. If disease do not prostrate him, if shot or shell do not maim him, if the fault of another do not dim his laurel—even if he rise to high command and save his country, the fate of Belisarius may still be his, and his reward be ingratitude, oblivion and the consoling sense of duty done.

At eighteen years of age declining, because of his youth, the lieutenancy of his company in the three months' service; captain of the first company of a three years' regiment; commanding Camp Wayne, West Chester, and mustering into the service the companies of the regiment; major in October, 1861, at Fortress Monroe, Port Royal, North Edisto, and in June, 1862, at James Island; in the winter of 1862-63 member of a board to retire incompetent officers; thanked by his brigade commander for prompt-

ness and efficiency in the action at Seabrook Point, June 18, 1863; rising from a sickbed to lead his regiment in the final assault on Forts Wagner and Gregg; in charge of an officers' school of instruction at Fernandina, Fla., and president of a general court-martial at the age of twenty-one; leading two surprise expeditions inland into Florida and Georgia, and capturing the Confederate Camp Cooper, and then commander of the post at Fernandina, his service showed how he had justified General Terry's prediction that he would make his mark.

In twenty-four hours after the arrival of relieving troops at Fernandina, he collected his command, scattered over a circuit of from ten to fourteen miles, had all the accounts with proper vouchers of post quartermaster, post commissary, ordnance officer and provost marshal, and 125 prisoners, transferred, marched his troops to the landing and embarked to join the Army of the James. When under twenty-two, promoted to lieutenant colonel, and still commanding the regiment as for a long time previously, and leading the advance on the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad; in the action at Swift Creek, May 8, and at Fort Darling and Drury's Bluff; checking Beauregard's advance troops for half a day on the Wier Bottom Church road; leading a charge at Foster's place, May 18, 1864, and another charge at Green Plains, where he lost two-thirds of his men and was three times wounded—so his record runs.

When twenty-two years old, on June 23, 1864, he was commissioned as colonel of his regiment, and twice more was he to be the first man to mount a Confederate work and implant the first Union Colors upon it. On August 14, 1864, in command of two regiments, he gave support to the Second Corps of Meade's Army. On the 15th he led his regiment in action, and on the 16th at Strawberry

Plains, drove the enemy from its intrenchments, placing a flag within a few feet of a Virginia flag.

He had just turned his twenty-second year when placed in command of the largest brigade of the Tenth Corps. He led it at Chaffin's Bluff, and at Fort Harrison he drove the enemy from its line and captured heavy guns and many prisoners. At Fort Gilmer he led his brigade through a mile of slashing and over a stream, and was again wounded and his horse was shot. At Darbytown road, October 29, he again led his command in action. His corps commander commended him for zealous and untiring efforts to make his brigade efficient, for the manner in which he led it in action, and recommended him for promotion, and his army commander conveyed the recommendation to President Lincoln.

At the assault and capture of Fort Fisher, a Confederate work stronger than Malakoff, on January 15, 1865, for the third time he placed the colors of his old regiment squarely upon the fort, the first Union colors to be there, and was again so seriously wounded that a coffin was ordered for him. His division commander, General Ames, declared him to be the "hero of Fort Fisher." Secretary of War Stanton wrote to President Lincoln citing his service, and in the name of the President tendered the thanks of the nation to the officers and men whose valor and skill had carried the fort. Salutes were ordered fired at every navy yard and by each of the armies in front of Lee.

On Secretary Stanton's recommendation given the brevet rank of brigadier general to date from the capture of Fort Fisher, January 15, he was appointed to the full rank of brigadier general of volunteers, February 18, 1865, and was the youngest officer in all the northern and southern armies to attain that rank—as later in 1866, at the age of twenty-four, when President Johnson appointed

him a colonel in the regular army, he was the youngest officer who had ever held that rank from the time of the establishment of the United States army.

In 1872, when he was thirty years old, many of the leading Republican newspapers of Pennsylvania urged his nomination for the office of Governor, an honor which he declined to consider. On account of his wounds he was placed on the retired list in 1883. But for his injuries, he would have risen to the command of the United States Army, as did General Miles, who, several years his senior in age, became a colonel on the same day in 1866 that General Pennypacker attained that rank.

Surely Melpomene presided at his birth. When, after the capture of Fort Fisher, he was borne to a vessel lying off the fort and laid upon a table in the saloon, he was hurled to the floor by the pitching of the boat. During dress parade at a Mississippi army post the huge flag pole collapsed and fell within a few feet of where he stood. In 1877 he came from Fort Riley to attend a family gathering at Washington's Camp ground at Pennypacker's Mills, on the Perkiomen. Floods washed away the railroad beds in the vicinity on the day of the meeting, and many of his relatives were killed. Not many years ago he was confined to his bed in his Philadelphia home, suffering more than his ordinary measure of torture from his wounds. His physician, the only other person in the room, stood at his bedside bending over him. Suddenly the doctor threw his arms about his patient's neck. The soldier looked up; the physician was dead. In 1872 he was present at a great review of troops in Germany. His horse became frightened and ran down the line of soldiers. The saddle-girth broke, throwing the rider to the side of the horse. Crippled by his wounds, he threw his arms around the neck of the animal and held fast until, after a

ride as wild as Mazeppa's, the horse was caught. Mounting again, he rode back. The Emperor of Austria brought him a glass of wine. The old German Emperor Frederick, the Crown Prince, afterward Emperor, and Bismarck came to him and praised his pluck. The Empress invited him to dinner. Count von Moltke received him with compliments, saying that he no doubt was the oldest general in the world and that he was glad to meet the youngest general. The Count asked him where he had been wounded. The American modestly replied that he had been wounded several times. The Count asked: "Where did you receive your worst wound?" General Pennypacker answered briefly, "At Fort Fisher." "Oh," said the Count, "that was on the Cape Fear River in North Carolina."

His uniform, including the hat which the German Crown Prince, afterward Frederick III, in a schoolboy spirit exchanged for that of the American officer, saying, "You wear my hat a while and I'll wear yours," together with swords, horse fittings and other relics of army service, will be preserved by the West Chester Historical Society. General Meade, thoughtful and attentive, voluntarily sent him letters to prominent officers in Europe. The names of both had been placed on the board of some soldier-exploitation scheme originating with cruder minds, and in a protecting way the victor at Gettysburg, who thought the scheme an unworthy one, said: "Don't have anything to do with it; I shan't." Meade's son, Colonel Meade, then president of the Philadelphia Club, socially the leading men's club in the city, not long after General Pennypacker had settled in Philadelphia, said that a number of the more influential members of the club as well as he himself would like to elect him to membership in the club, but were doubtful as to his attitude toward the project. Advice was sought and the suggestion was dropped. And at the end this gallant soldier, who shrank from per-

sonal notoriety, was buried in the National Cemetery, Philadelphia, with the simple services of the Society of Friends.

Secretary of War Dickinson has somewhat overdrawn the indifference of the people of Philadelphia toward him. Long ago the Pennsylvania Society of the Cincinnati elected him an honorary member. The Union League, somewhat late, it is true, considering its origin, made him an honorary member. A State military office was offered him and declined. The Pennsylvania Commandery of the Loyal Legion would have made him its commander but for his own unwillingness. To his home at 300 South Tenth Street came daily men from the city, the State and distant States, occasionally a Secretary of War, a general commanding the United States Army, soldiers who had fought the good fight with him or Quaker pacifists whose hearts were won by his courtesy and gentlemanliness.

Not the least of his rare qualities were his good manners. He was as punctilious about doing the right thing as he was about the punctuation of a letter, wherein no expert proofreader was his superior. The widow of President Polk said he was the only commanding officer ever stationed at Nashville who knew how to present to her properly on New Year's Day the subordinate officers of the post. Keen perceptive faculty, accuracy, system, order, a tenacious memory, humor—all these were his, as well as a will like adamant and a shrewdness whose other name is wisdom. But it was the impression made by the courtesy of the high-bred gentleman that men brought in contact with him oftenest carried away. From the humble orderly to men of the highest station it was the same. It was the same a few hours before his end, when, fast bleeding to death from that half-century-old wound whose fatal flow no art could check, his nerves

literally bullet-jangled, and but lately recovered from another illness that would have ended many another career, he put aside weakness, pain and the fast inclosing shades of death to give a last smile and last courteous words to one who would have helped if help there could have been.

The young officer of thirty-five had commanded the Department of the South, embracing many of the Southern States, in a stormy period of the nation's life. His active work was finished at the age of forty-one. His heroism is recorded in Grant's "Memoirs." He had thirty-three years more of life that were years of endurance. With so rich an equipment of mind, character and personality—he was one of the handsomest officers in the army—far as he went, how much further he might have gone save for his grievous wounds!

Intended sophistry and unintended confusion of thought, to which men like Charles Francis Adams yielded, have combined to teach American youth that it is immaterial on which side of an issue involving the life of the Union American manhood takes stand. The death of the unimportant Confederate Mosby receives more attention from the press than the death of the far more important Union General Gregg. Does such perversion of thought indicate a national canker that needs to be watched? Everywhere patriotic societies of women condemned the attack made by Secretary of War Baker upon the soldiers of Valley Forge. The Daughters of the Confederacy were silent.

Secretary of War Dickinson wrote from Chicago to the *Public Ledger* that if the Southern Confederacy had possessed a soldier of the high character and splendid achievements of General Pennypacker, not only his home city, but the whole South would have known where he lived. A writer in the *New York Sun* said that Philadelphia has

another Mecca in his grave. A walk of a little more than an hour will cover the distance between the birthplace of General Wayne at Waynesborough and that of General Pennypacker at Valley Forge. As inseparable as the storming of Stony Point and the name of Anthony Wayne are the storming of Fort Fisher and the name of Galusha Pennypacker.

